

September 27, 1999

Votes Today on Competing Education Resolutions:

**While Democrats Demand Federal Control,
GOP Commits to Empowering Educators**

Today the Senate will vote on two competing education resolutions, one offered by Senator Lott and the other by Senator Daschle. The resolutions clearly spell out the differing education priorities between Republicans and Democrats.

Republicans Trust Parents and Localities to Make the Right Choices

The resolution offered by Senator Lott affirms Republicans' dedication to improving educational quality and freeing educators — including parents — from federal red tape.

- According to the resolution, "Congress should reject a one-size-fits-all approach to education, and local schools should have the freedom to prioritize their spending and tailor their curriculum according to the unique educational needs of their children[.]"
- Earlier this year, the Senate passed the Republican Education Flexibility Partnership Act (S. 280), known as the "Ed-Flex bill," sponsored by Senator Bill Frist (R-TN).
- This bill frees educators in all 50 states from federal regulations that hamper their ability to innovate and to meet the individual needs of students and local schools.
- Republicans are committed to further freeing educators from federal red tape: "The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act [ESEA] of 1965 will enable this Congress to continue its efforts to send decision-making back to States, local schools and families."

The Republican tax-cut bill — vetoed last week by President Clinton — contained numerous provisions to improve educational choice and affordability. Had it been enacted into law, that bill would have:

- Given 20 million children the benefit of \$12 billion in Education Savings Account deposits that would be used to better their education,
- Given tax relief to 1 million college students in state pre-paid tuition plans,
- Given employer-based education assistance to 1 million workers,
- Granted every student and recent graduate in America a tax break on the interest on their student loans,
- Given every state and local government tax incentives to construct new schools, and
- Given all elementary and secondary teachers tax relief for their professional development expenses.

All these education initiatives were thwarted by the veto pen of a Democrat president.

Democrats Want Washington Calling the Shots

Senator Daschle's resolution says nothing of local control. Instead, it reads like marching orders for every school district in the nation. In signaling his party's intent to command schools to hire more teachers, expand after-school programs, and increase school construction — even if they have more pressing needs — the Minority Leader shows that Democrats continue to think Washington, DC, is the source of all wisdom when it comes to improving education.

The Democrats' handling of Ed-Flex provides an interesting study of where their priorities lie. Although most Senate Democrats voted in favor of the widely popular Education Flexibility Partnership Act, most could not bear the thought of removing federal mandates. Thus, they tried to violate the spirit of the bill with more Washington-knows-best mandates, such as requiring schools to hire more teachers, with the ultimate hope of killing the underlying bill. Simply put, Democrats demand that local education agencies spend funds on Washington's priorities, not on each community's most pressing needs.

Republicans defeated these amendments, and Ed-Flex is now a reality. During the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (likely to be before the Senate next month), Republicans will continue to return decision-making authority to those who know best, and defeat Democrat attempts to treat educators like children.

RPC staff contact: Michael F. Cannon, 224-2946